

# A Probable "Hand-and-Eye" Petroglyph, Gallia County, Ohio

By James L. Murphy  
The Ohio Historical Society

An unusual petroglyph associated with a small, multi-component rock shelter near Tycoon Lake in Gallia County, Ohio, may be an example of the southeastern "Southern Cult" Hand-and-Eye motif.

The petroglyph lies on a sloping natural bedding plane of shaly sandstone of the lower Conemaugh Group (Pennsylvanian), probably the Buffalo Sandstone Member (Blake, 1952: 21; Condit, 1917). As shown in Figure 1, the design is crudely pecked into the rock and measures about ten inches in length. Only four digits are represented, but this is not unusual with the hand-and-eye motif. Variations of this motif occurring on Moundville, Alabama, pottery include four- and even three-fingered hands, as shown in Figure 2, taken from the Fundabark's *Sun Circles and Human Hands*.

Test excavations at the Tycoon Lake shelter have revealed a basal Archaic level, an Early Woodland component, and extensive Late Woodland deposits characterized by limestone-tempered, cordmarked ceramics. The uppermost few inches of the six foot deep shelter deposits contain limestone-tempered ware, a few shell-tempered sherds, and sherds containing mixed shell- and limestone-temper. Radiocarbon dates are not yet available from this unit, and it is not possible to determine when the transition from limestone-tempering to shell-tempering occurred. It is also likely that the topmost zone represents several mixed components. At the nearby Bob Evans shelter (Murphy, 1974), a date of A.D. 720 is available on limestone-tempered ware, and the same site has yielded some Philo Punctate sherds guess-dated at ca A.D. 1200 on the basis of radiocarbon dates from the Muskingum Valley (Morton, 1977). Radiocarbon dates from the Roseberry site, Mason Co., West Virginia appear to indicate a date of ca A.D. 1100 for the shell-tempered ceramics from the Ohio River site (Jeff Graybill, pers. comm.).

The Southeastern Ceremonial Complex is generally dated somewhat later. Although typical "Southern Cult" motives such as the "weeping eye" are present at Cahokia as early as the Stirling Phase—A.D. 1050-1150 (Fowler and Hall, 1975:6), these are more common in the later phases, particularly the Sand

Prairie Phase—A.D. 1250-1500 (Fowler and Hall, 1978:566).

Another possible Ohio "Hand-and-Eye" petroglyph, now destroyed, has been reported previously (Murphy, 1977) from near Hanover, Licking County. It is shown in Figure 3, reproduced by James Morton from a color slide taken by James B. Bailey in the early 1960s.

The only other known instance of the "Hand-and-Eye" motif in Ohio is an engraved celt from the South Park site, Cuyahoga Co. (Brose, 1971). Although this example cannot be directly linked with the A.D. 1650 (Seuss-corrected to A.D. 1610-1520) radiocarbon date obtained from my 1968 excavations at the South Park site, such an age seems likely.

In any case, the small amount of shell-tempered ware present in the Tycoon Lake rock shelter can best be interpreted as representing one or more brief stays by small Late Prehistoric (Fort Ancient) hunting groups at any time from A.D. 1100 to 1600, and the "Hand-and-Eye" petroglyph is undoubtedly associated with one of these. Permanent, year-round Fort Ancient occupations have not been found in the Raccoon Creek Valley, and it is believed that the region served only as a game procurement area for Fort Ancient settlements along the Ohio and Scioto rivers.

Blake, Oliver D.

1952 *The geology of Gallia County, Ohio*. Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, The Ohio State University, Columbus.

Brose, David S.

1971 The Southeastern Ceremonial Complex in northern Ohio. *Ohio Archaeologist* 21(4): 16-18.

Condit, D. Dale

1912 *Conemaugh Formation in Ohio*. Geological Survey of Ohio, 4th Series, Bull. 17.

Fowler, Melvin L. and Robert L. Hall

1975 Archaeological phases at Cahokia. Pp. 1-14 in *Perspectives in Cahokia Archaeology*. Illinois Archaeological Survey, Inc., Bulletin 10. University of Illinois, Urbana.

1978 Late prehistory of the Illinois area. Pp. 560-568 in *Handbook of North American Indians*, Vol. 15, *Northeast*, Bruce G. Trigger, ed. Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.

Fundabark, Emma Lila and Mary Douglass  
1957 *Sun circles and human hands*. Emma  
Lila Fundabark, Luverne, Alabama.

Morton, John  
1977 Radiocarbon dates from Late Prehistoric  
sites in the Muskingum Valley. Pp. 14-16  
in *The Richards site and the Philo Phase  
of the Fort Ancient Tradition*, Jeff Cars-  
kadden and James Morton, ed. Occa-  
sional Papers in Muskingum Valley  
Archaeology, No. 2. The Muskingum  
Arch-Valley Archaeological Survey,  
Zanesville.

Murphy, James L.  
1974 Daniel Boone's button. *The Explorer*  
16(2):12-17.  
1977 The Hanover petroglyph site (33-Li-56),  
Licking County, Ohio. *Ohio Archaeolo-  
gist* 27(2):12-15.



Fig. 3 (Murphy) Portion of Blackhand petroglyph destroyed  
by construction of route 16 in Licking County.



Fig. 1 (Murphy) Gallia County petroglyph of human hand  
with four digits.

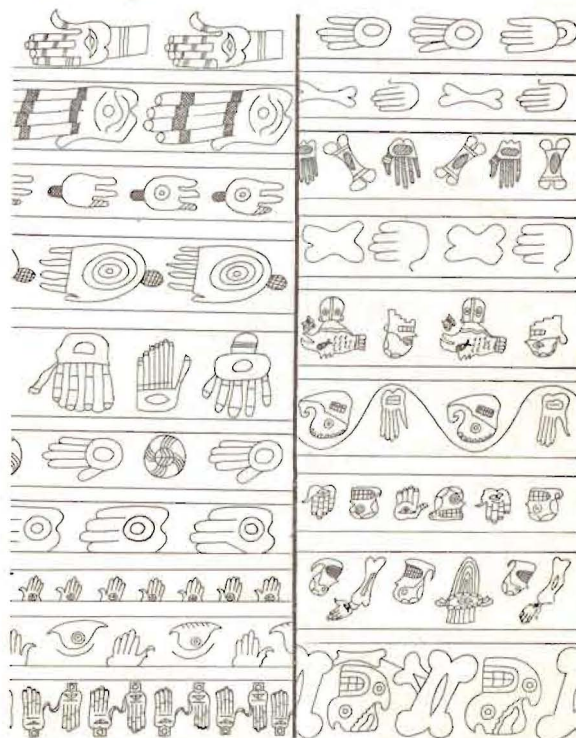


Figure 2. Variations of the "Hand-and-eye" motif found on  
Moundville, Alabama, pottery. Taken from the Fundabarks'  
*Sun Circles and Human Hands*.